

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

----- 104666

P 101010Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2701

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 0357

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PF R, US, EF, XF

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH OSMAN SALEH SABBE OF ELF/PLF

BEGINING SUMMARY.

1. ERITREAN PEOPLES' LIBERATION FORCES (PLF) SIXKESMAN
OSMAN SALEH SABBE CALLED ON ME MARCH 10 AT EMBASSY TO APPEAL
FOR US RESTRAINT IN MEETING PMAC'S REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL ARMS

AND AMMUNITION. HE SAID INTRODUCTION OF ADDITIONAL ARMS INTO
ETHIOPIA BY US AT THIS TIME ALULD ONLY CREATE MORE BLOODSHED,
BOTH IN ERITREA AND ELSEWHERE IN ETHIOPIA AND HASTEN DISSOLUTION
OF EMPIRE. ACCORDING OSMAN, ELF/PLF NOW IN PROCESS OF FORMING
JOINT COMMITTEE WHICH WILL PROCEED TO KHARTOUM WITHIN TWO WEEKS
TO ATTEMPT BEGIN TALKS WITH PMAC UNDER SUDANESE AUSPICES TO
FIND POLITICAL SOLUTION. HE URGED USG TO SUPPORT NEGOTIATIONS
BETWEEN PLF AND PMAC. OSMAN, WHO ARRIVED MOGADISCIO FROM
ADEN SEVERAL DAYS AGON, MET WITH SIAD MARCH 9, AND PLANS TO LEAVE
FOR YAR WITHIN NEXT SEVERAL DAYS. END SUMMARY.

2. OSMAN SALEH SABBE OF PLF SENT MESSAGE TO ME MARCH 9 THAT HE
WISHED TALK TO ME PRIVATELY DURING HIS MOGADISCIO STAY, WHERE
HE IS GUEST OF GSDR. C SUGGESTED TO INTERMEDIARY THAT HE CALL
AT EMBASSY MARCH 10 AND HE AGREED. IN DISCUSSION MARCH 10,
OSMAN SAID THAT HE HAD HAD INTERMITTANT CONTACTS WITH AMERICAN
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DIPLOMATS IN PREVIOUS YEARS, IN JIDDA AND BEIRUT, ETC., AND

NOW WISHED TO PRESENT PLF/ELF CASE AGAINST ADDITIONAL US ARMS AND AMMUNITIONS SHIPMENTS TO ETHIOPIA. HE SAID PLF HAD SENT TELEGRAMS TO THIS EFFECT BOTH TO PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY KISSINGER TEN DAYS AGO.

3. ACCORDING OSMAN, ADDITIONAL AMMUNITION AND ARMS FOR PMAC WOULD NOT RPT NOT TILT BALANCE IN ERITREA BUT WOULD ONLY ESCALATE SAVAGERY OF FIGHTING, WHICH WOULD SPREAD TO OTHER REGIONS OF EMPIRE WHERE ETHNIC MINORITIES WERE INCREASINGLY RESTLESS UNDER DIRG RULE. SITUATION IN EMPIRE THUS REACHING FLASH POINT AND COULD IGNITE IF PMAC PRESSED ON WITH ADDITIONAL ARMAMENTS IN USELESS ATTEMPT TO WIN MILITARY VICTORY IN ERITREA. PMAC WOULD THEREFORE BRING ABOUT WHAT IT HOPES MOST TO AVOID, THAT IS, THE DISSOLUTION OF THE EMPIRE.

4. OSMAN THUS APPEALING TO US AND OTHER WESTERN SUPPLIERS TO STOP PROVIDING ARMAMENTS AND TO URGE PMAC TO NEGOTIATE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT TO ERITREAN PROBLEM. HE BELIEVED THAT PMAC COULD NOT RPT NOT QUICKLY TURN TO ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF SUPPLY, TO SOVIETS OR TO CHINESE, SINCE RE-EQUIPMENT PROBLEMS TOO GREAT, EVEN IF SOVIETS AND CHINESE WERE WILLING TO PROVIDE ARMS.

5. OSMAN SAID PLF DID NOT RPT NOT SEEK DISSOLUTION OF EMPIRE, WHICH WOULD PERPETUATE ENORMOUS POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN AREA. PLF DID SEEK POLITICAL SOLUTION HOWEVER AND AJS WILLING TO BEGIN DISCUSSIONS WITH PMAC WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS ABOUT ERITREA. ALTHOUGH PLF ZS COMMITTED IN PRINCIPLE TO SEPARATE ERITREAN STATE, IT WAS NEVERTHELESS MORE FLEXIBLE THAN THAT, PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS QUESTION OF ETHIOPIAN ACCESS TO RED SEA. SOME ARRANGEMENT WHICH WOULD TAKE ACCOUNT OF ETHIOPIA'S NEEDS FOR PORT MIGHT BE MANAGED, DESPITE FACT THAT HISTORICALLY, ETHIOPIA HAD HAD NO SUCH ACCESS FOR CENTURIES PRIOR TO ERITREAN FEDERATION WITH ETHIOPIA.

6. PMAC WAS ALSO INCORRECT IN ASSUMPTION WHAT SEPARATE ERITREA

STATE WOULD BE WHOLLY ARAEUC IN POLITICAL OR SOCIAL ORIENTATION. INDEPENDENT ERITREA WOULD NOT BE RABID ARAB MINI-STATE BUT WOULD BE TIED ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY TO ETHIOPIA, AS WELL AS TO OTHZR STATES ON RED SEA. IT WOULD HAVE ITS OWN NATION CHARACTER WHICH

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WOULD REFLECT ETHNIC AND CONFESSIONAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN ERITREA.

7. IN LATTER REGARD, OSMAN SAID THAT ARAB PRONOUNCEMENTS ON ERITREA (I.E., SYRIAN RECOGNITION OF INDEPENDENT ERITREA) HAD NOT RPT NOT BEEN HELPFUL TO ERITREAN CAUSE. COMPLEXITIES OF ERITREAN SITUATION HAD BEEN GROSSLY SIMPLIFIED IN DAMASCUS AND BAGHDAD AND HAD ENABLED PMAC IN ADDIS TO MISREPRESENT CHARACTER OF ELF AND ITS ARAB TIES. HE HAD APPEALED TO DAMASCUS OFFICIALS

RECENTLY TO BETTER COORDINATE THEIR QTE PROPAGANDA UNQTE
EFFOQZS REGARDING ERITREA WITH HIS OFFICE SO THAT STATEMENTS
COULD NOT RPT NOT BE USED BY PMAC OR OTHERS TO SHOW ETHIOPIANS
AND OTHER AFRICANS THAT ERITREAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT WAS WHOLLY
A CREATURE OF MILLWANT PAN-ARABISM. ERITREA HAD ITS OWN UNIQUE
NATIONAL IDENTITY WHICH ARAB PRESS HAD UNFORTUNATELY OBLITERATED
(HE TOLD ME HE WOULD MEET WITH ARAB AMBASSADORS IN M
HADISCIO
SHORTLY REGARDING THIS PROBLEM).

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

----- 104676

P 101010Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2702

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 0357

EXDIS

8. OSMAN THOUGHT BEST APPROACH TO POLITICAL RESOLUTION OF
PROBLEM WAS THROUGH SUDAN UNDER NIMEIRI'S SPONSORSHIP. AT
PRESENT TIME, ELF AND PLF WERE TRYING RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES
AND APPOINT JOINT COMMITTEE TO PROCEED TO KHARTOUM WITHIN TWO
WEEKS TO ATTEMPT BEGIN DISCUSSIONS WITH PMAC. HE WAS NOT RPT
NOT CERTAIN COMMITTEE WOULD BE FORMED WITHIN TWO WEEKS BUT HE
WAS HOPING FOR BEST. SUCH TALKS WOULD BEGIN WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS
(ALTHOUGH HE REPEATED ON SDMERAL OCCASIONS THAT PLF ADMANTLY
OPPOSED TO RETURN TO CONFEDERATED STATUS). PLF WOULD EVEN
AGREE TO PLEBISCITE IN ERITREA, IF THAT NECESSARY -- IN WHICH
CASE, SEPARATISTS WOULD WIN HANDS DOWN. HE SAID HE THOUGHT
THAT NIMEIRI COULD PUT SUFFICIENT PRESSURE ON PMAC SO THAT LATTER
WOULD BE FORCED TO NEGOTIATE. HE DID NOT RPT NOT ELABORATE.

9. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT REPORTED PLF REJECTION OF EARLIER NIMEIRI
PEACE INITIATIVE, OSMAN SAID THAT PLF HAD OPPOSED CEASE FIRE

BECAUSE MOMENTUM WAS WITH PLF/ELF FORCES IN ERITREA AND ANY
CEASE FIRE WOULD HAVE GIVEN PMAC TIME TO CONSOLIDATE ITS FORCES,
OBTAIN ADDITIONAL MIL EQUIPMENT AND AGAIN ATTEMPT TO FRESH
INSURGENCY AT TIME OF ITS OWN CHOOSING. PLF HAD RECEIVED MESSAGES
FROM ITS FORCES IN ERITREA URGING THAT CEASE FIRE NOT BE
ACCEPTED. MOREOVER, PLF HAD OBJECTED TO LANGUAGE CALLING FOR
AMNESTY, WHICH IMPLIED THAT ELF FORCES WERE QTE REBELS QUNTE,
A LOCUTION WHICH WAS POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE.

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10. WHEN I TOLD OSMAN THAT PLF HAD VERY TOUGH FLIGHT AHEAD
IN WINNING OAU SUPPORT FOR SEPARATIST/ERITREAN STATE, HE AGREED
BUT SAID THAT PLF WAS NOW ON THE DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE IN AFRICA.
ELF/PLF WOULD
GO TO OAU SUMMIT AT KAMPALA IN JULY AS OBSERVERS,
AND THEIR EFFORTS THERE WOULD BE FULLY SUPPORTED BY AMIN, THEIR
STANCHEST ADVOCATE IN AFRICA. ELF ALSO ATTEMPTING WOO MOBUTU'S
SUPPORT. LATTER HAD HOPES OF BRINGING OAU SECRETARIAT TO KINSHASA
AND ALSO HAD ASPIRATIONS TO AFRICAN LEADERSHIP, WHICH INCLUDED
BRIDGING OF AFRO-ARAB DIFFERENCES. HE NOTED ALSO THAT LIBERIAN
PRESIDENT TOLBERT HAD SENT MESSAGE TO PMAC RECENTLY URGING POLITACAL
SETTLEMENT TO ERITREAN PROBLEM, AND HE BELIEVED SIMILAR
SENTIMENT IN AFRICA IS NOW GROWING. WHEN I NOTED THAT SENTIMENT

FOR POLITICAL RESOLUTION AND SUPPORT FOR SEPARATE STATE WERE
QUITE DIFFERENT, OSMAN REPLIED THAT PLF WAS ATTEMPTING TO EDUCATE
W RICANS TO HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT ERITREA (HE HWB RECENTLY
WRITTEN BOOK ON SUBJECT, WHICH WILL BE PUBLISHED SHORTLY) WHICH
SUPPORTED ERITREAN SEPARATISM.

11.DURING CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT SIAD ON MARCH 9, OSMAN
ASKED SIAD IN HIS OAU ROLE TO SUPPORT PLF REQUEST TO APPOINT
OAU COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY TO EXAMINE ERITREAN PROBLEM. SIAD
HAD DEMURRED HOWEVER, POINTING OUT THATOANY INITIATIVE HE TOOK

WOULD BE MISUNDERSTOOD IN ADDIS. OSMAN OBSERVED THAT SIAD TOO
PREOCCUPIED WITH HIS OWN PROBLEMS TO GIVE MUCH THOUGHT TO ERITREA
OR TO ATTEMPT TO CAPITALIZE IN OGADEN ON PMAC'S PROBLEM IN
ERITREA. HE PREDICATED SIAD WOULD CONTINUE TO DO NOTHING AT
PRESENT TO SEEK ADVANTAGE IN OGADEN.

12. OSMAN SAID THAT PLF NOW FACING PROBLEM IN PDRY, WHICH HE
HAD JUST VISITED. PDRY WAS NOT RPT NOT PERMITTING PLF ARMS
SHIPMENTS TO FLOW THROUGH ADEN AND HE HAD DISCUSSED MATTER WITH
PRIME MINISTER, WHO HAD TOLD HIM THAT PMAC WAS QTE SOCIALIST UNQTE
REGIME. PDRY WANTED NO TROUBLE WITH ADDIS. OSMAN THOUGHT

SOVIETS WERE BEHIND CUT-OFF OF ARMS SHIPMENTS THROUGH ADEN.

13. I TOLD OSMAN THAT THE PMAC'S REQUEST FOR AMMUNITION WAS NOW
UNDER CONSIDERATION IN WASHINGTON AND THAT I DID NOT RPT NOT
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KNOW WHETHER A DECISION HAD YET BEEN MADE. I SAID I WOULD PASS
HIS APPEALS ON TO WASHINGTON.
HAMRICK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE, LIBERATION FRONTS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MOGADI00357
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750083-0181
From: MOGADISCIO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750366/aaaachwv.tel
Line Count: 234
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 AUG 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <26 NOV 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH OSMAN SALEH SABBE OF ELF/PLF BEGING SUMMARY.
TAGS: PFOR, SO, US, ET, ELF, PLF, (OSMAN SALEH SABBE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006